

*The Character and Blessedness of those  
to whom to live is CHRIST, and  
to die GAIN:*

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*26*  
Represented in a

# S E R M O N

P R E A C H ' D A T

*Ilminster, Somerset,*

MAY 25, 1738.

On occasion of the

Much-lamented D E A T H  
*of Mr. Grove, & approved*  
OF THE LATE

Rev. Mr. *James Strong,*

Who died May 21. in the 53<sup>d</sup>  
Year of his Age.

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By T H O M A S A M O R Y.

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*Published at the unanimous Request of the*  
MINISTERS *present.*

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L O N D O N,

Printed for RICHARD HETT, at the Bible and  
Crown; and J. GRAY, at the Cross-keys, both in  
the Poultry. MDCC XXXVIII. Price 6 d.



The Character and Bishopric of those  
to whom this is Christ and  
to the GAIN

*W. Augrave*

S E R M O N

PREACHED AT

St. James's Church



MAY 1738

On occasion of the

Much-lamented DEATH  
OF THE LATE

Rev. Mr. James Strong

Who died May 21. in the 53<sup>d</sup>  
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By THOMAS AMORY.

Printed at the monument Head of the  
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PHIL. II. 21.

*For to me to live is Christ, and to die  
is gain.*

**T**HIS character St. *Paul* gives of himself, belongs in a lower sense, to every sincere christian, and was in a good degree the character of that able and faithful servant of Christ, whose death we now lament, and who so often from this place hath endeavoured to form Christ in you: I have therefore chosen these words for the subject of our meditation on this awful occasion. They are added by the apostle as the reason of his confidence, that *Christ would be magnify'd in his body, either by his life, or death*<sup>1</sup>. If he lived, it would be for the advancement of the christian cause; and if he died a martyr, he should confirm, and do honour to it in death: because ever since his embracing the gospel, it had been the main concern and business of his life to spread the religion of Jesus; and because he was assured that if he died for it, death would be infinitely his gain, introducing him to the glorious presence of Christ, and a share in his happiness. Animated by such an hearty and approved zeal, and so divine an encouragement, he could not fail of honouring his master, and promoting his cause, whether he

<sup>1</sup> Ver. 20.



lived, or died. To render our meditations on this text the more useful, I shall,

*First*, DISTINCTLY represent their character who can say, *to me to live is Christ*.

*Secondly*, WHAT gain death is to persons of this character.

*Thirdly*, SHOW the connection there is between this course of life, and the happiness that follows it.

AND then add a few reflections.

*First*, I AM distinctly to represent their character, who can with truth say each for himself, *to me to live is Christ*. The following particulars are included in it.

I. THEY have, after a thorough conviction of the truth and excellency of the christian religion, received it, as the foundation of their hopes, and the rule of their lives; and thus chosen Christ for their Lord and Saviour. St. Paul<sup>1</sup> had the fullest conviction of our Lord's divine authority, by his glorious appearance to him, by the miraculous gifts he conferred upon him, and the wonders he enabled him to work in his name, throughout the Roman empire<sup>2</sup>. He had also the highest value for that religion, by which *all who believed were justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses*<sup>3</sup>: which supplied the weakness of the law by the aids of the Divine Spirit, enabling us to mortify the deeds of the body<sup>4</sup>, which *abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light*<sup>5</sup>; at the same time directing us, in order to attain this immortality, not to the observance of carnal ordinances, but *to live soberly, righteously, and godly*

<sup>1</sup> Acts ix. 14.

xv. 18, 19.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Tim. i. 10.

Cor. xiv. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Acts xiii. 39.

2 Cor. xii. 11, 12.

<sup>2</sup> Rom.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. vii. 25. viii. 1.



*in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ. He therefore accounted all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. Thus they also to whom to live is Christ, are upon good grounds established in their belief of the truth and excellency of his religion, though not in the miraculous way in which he convinced St. Paul. They see the want a world lost in ignorance, superstition, and vice, was in of Christ, to turn them from darkness to light. Their reason discerns and approves the excellency of his precepts, and the admirable tendency of his doctrines, to form men to the noblest conceptions of the Deity, the most exalted love to him, and a resemblance of his moral perfections. Sensible of their frailty and guilt, they esteem it a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ came into the world to save sinners; and to bless them by turning every one from his iniquities. They rejoice in his offers of pardon, and divine assistance; and bless the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away; reserved in heaven for us, who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation. With pleasure also they observe this revelation, which hath all the internal characters of truth and excellency they can desire, confirmed by signs, and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost; and that to the reality of these facts, they have the testimony of eye and ear witnesses, who sacrificed every worldly interest to this testimony, and sealed it with their blood. Convinced*

<sup>1</sup> Tit. i. 12, 13.

<sup>2</sup> Phil. iii. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Tim. i. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Acts iii. 26.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Pet. i. 3, 4, 5.

<sup>6</sup> Heb. ii. 4.

<sup>7</sup> John i. 1.

therefore



therefore that God hath all possible claim to their faith and obedience, and that he hath appointed Jesus to be the *light of the world*, the *saviour* and *the Lord of all*, and that the offers he makes them in the name of God are infinitely advantageous, they have heartily embraced them; repenting of their former sins, and resolving to make the gospel of Christ their rule of life, as the happiness he promiseth to the obedient is their highest hope and most desired portion. It is granted, all sincere christians do not apprehend the evidences and excellence of christianity in an equal degree; but then, other things being equal, in proportion to the clearness and strength of their conviction of its truth and value, will be their concern to live to Christ. Those honest persons also who least distinctly discern its evidences, yet by the agreement of its doctrines and precepts with the uncorrupted sense of their minds, and its experienced fitness and energy to form them to true goodness, and prepare them for a rational and divine felicity, are determined firmly to believe it, and cheerfully and steadily to practise its rule: This is all strictly necessary for them. But for those who desire to live *extensively* for Christ, to recommend and promote the faith and practice of his religion among men, it is greatly necessary that they themselves first clearly apprehend the proofs of its truth and excellence, and heartily and judiciously approving its divine tendency, be *ready to render to others a good reason of the hope that is in them*: Being thus convinced of the advantage of their master's service, they will more strongly and successfully persuade others to enter into it, and persevere. If our faith be thus founded on a rock, it will stand the assault of temptation and persecution, and our zeal will be,



not a short lived passion, but a steady vigorous principle, and its flame always kept alive, by the *known* truth and value of the religion for which we are zealous: without this we shall most probably prove inconstant, or, which is as bad, be zealous for groundless opinions and useless fancies and practices of our own, or our party, rather than for the genuine important truths, and noble duties and virtues revealed and taught by Christ our great master.

2. *THEY* to whom *to live is Christ*, steadily govern their temper and actions by the rules of his religion; and their faith in him works by love<sup>1</sup>, and overcomes the world<sup>2</sup>. They don't satisfy themselves with crying, *Lord, Lord*! making a zealous profession of his religion, and contending for his honour; but *do the things he hath commanded*<sup>3</sup>. Thus St. Paul kept under his body, and brought it into subjection; he was crucified with Christ<sup>4</sup> to the world, and lived by the faith of the Son of God<sup>5</sup>. He could appeal to the elders of Ephesus, that he had coveted no man's silver or gold; esteeming it more blessed to give than to receive<sup>6</sup>: that he had served the Lord with all humility of mind. Yea, he could call God to witness, how holily, justly, and unblameably, he behaved among them that believed<sup>7</sup>. And not thinking himself to have attained, forgetting those things that were behind, he pressed forward to perfection<sup>8</sup>. And thus all, to whom *to live is Christ*, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, his temper and spirit, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lust thereof<sup>9</sup>. As Christ hath revealed his father to them in a light most amiable; they love the Lord their God with all their hearts, and souls, and strength<sup>10</sup>; cherish a sense of his presence and benefits, by daily prayer and praise; praying without

<sup>1</sup> Gal. v. 6.   <sup>2</sup> John v. 4.   <sup>3</sup> Mat. vii. 21.   <sup>4</sup> John xv. 14.  
<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 27.   <sup>6</sup> Gal. ii. 20.   <sup>7</sup> Acts xx. 19.   <sup>8</sup> 1 Thess. ii.  
 10.   <sup>9</sup> Phil. iii. 12, 13.   <sup>10</sup> Rom. xiii. 14.   <sup>11</sup> Mat. xxii. 37.  
*ceasing*



*ceasing, and in every thing giving thanks; they commend themselves and all their ways to God in well doing; cast all their care upon him, believing all things will work together for good to them that love God; and they rejoice, in hope of his glory, and study to be perfect, as their heavenly Father is perfect. As Christ hath given them a pattern of a most extensive benevolence, and unwearied goodness, and encouraged their imitation by the prospect of an eternal reward, they esteem it their great concern in life to do good, and to their power make all around them happy, by the best discharge of every relative duty, and the best improvement of all their advantages for usefulness. They look not on their own things only, but on the things of others also; and the same mind is in them which also was in Christ Jesus. Christ hath brought life and immortality to light, and hath assured them of a rational and divine felicity in heaven, where the low indulgencies of sense and appetite find no place: they are therefore temperate in all things, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, and judge their chief business in life to be, not the full gratification of their senses, but improving the purity of their minds, and their disposition for divine pleasures; cleansing themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and perfecting holiness in the fear of God, and by the hope of seeing and enjoying him. They do not content themselves with talking much of communion with God, but manifest they converse with him by growing like him in true goodness, and by a fixed regard to him, and his will, in their whole behaviour. They do not satisfy themselves with expressing a great zeal for the name and person*

<sup>1</sup> Theff. v. 17, 18. <sup>2</sup> 1 Pet. v. 7. <sup>3</sup> Rom. viii. 28. v. 2.  
<sup>4</sup> Mat. v. 48. <sup>5</sup> Eph. vi. 1---9. <sup>6</sup> Phil. ii. 4, 5. <sup>7</sup> 2 Tim.  
i. 10. <sup>8</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 25. <sup>9</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 11. <sup>10</sup> 2 Cor. vii. 1.  
<sup>11</sup> John iii. 2, 3.



*the Death of the Rev. Mr. Strong.* 9

of Christ, but prove they have a *real* veneration of his excellencies by *resembling him*, and a *heartly* zeal for his religion by *obeying it*. They do not content themselves with *barely talking* of the vanity of the world, and the blessedness of heaven; but in their whole conduct shew a contempt of the world, in comparison of the satisfactions of devotion, integrity, and doing good. By a chearful practice of the greatest instances of a *necessary* self-denial, they prove their happiness to be in heaven; and by an abounding charity according to their abilities, lay up treasure there; and the constant composure and chearfulness of their spirits, amidst the changes of the present life, make it appear, they think these trials *not worthy to be compared with the glory that will be revealed*; and are pleased they can make them work for their eternal good.

3. THEY to whom to live is Christ, heartily endeavour to spread in the world the belief and practice of his religion. This was the great business of St. Paul's life after his conversion, *to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they might receive the remission of their sins, and an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith in Christ*. This in a peculiar manner is the business of the ministers of the gospel; yet not so peculiar to them, but that all true lovers of Christ are inclined and obliged, according to their abilities, to advance his cause amongst men. They know his religion is fitted to serve the greatest happiness of all, both in this life, and for eternity; *that he died for all*, and that the holiness and happiness of mankind are his reward: As therefore they love their Saviour, and like him are lovers of

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xxvi. 18.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. v. 15.

<sup>4</sup> If. liii. 10, 12.

<sup>5</sup> John xvii. 2.



mankind, they cannot but endeavour he should be glorious, and rewarded in their holiness and happiness. For this purpose the sincerely devoted to Christ are studious to learn *his will, and his truth*; they call no man master, since one is their master, even Christ; they are not blindly devoted to the authority of any human guides, or the established notions of any party; but it is their honest and diligent endeavour to know the genuine doctrines and precepts of Christ, and then honestly and openly to recommend them, tho' they may not agree with the traditions and commandments of men. They do not look into the scriptures with a fixed resolution to find there the favourite tenets of a party, and to force thence passages and authorities to confirm them; but it is their earnest desire, *teach me thy way, O Lord, shew me thy truth! and I will hear what Christ the Lord says.* Human phrases and notions, consecrated by long use and authority, have no weight with them: *It is the faith once for all delivered to the saints*; they would discover and embrace; and it is this, when found, they endeavour with a zeal answerable to the importance of its several articles, to recommend to the world, whether popular or not. They know if they please men, at the expence of the truths Christ hath taught, they are not then his servants; and that of them who are ashamed of Christ and his words before men, of them will the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels. Have notions then prevailed which he apprehends dishonourable to God, and destructive of his moral perfections, contrary to the abounding grace of the gospel, and the general strain of

• Mat. xxiii. 19.

• Mat. viii. 38.

• Jude 3.

• Gal. i. 19.



Christ's religion, and which appear to him in their consequences destructive of the love of God and mankind, and of the chief motives to holiness, which are the distinguishing excellence of his religion; tho' these errors and corruptions may have been long established, and become venerable by the numbers and characters of those who may have implicitly and incautiously espoused them; all this can have no weight with him who heartily loves Christ, to bias his judgment, or hinder his profession of the truth. The honour of God and of Christ are dearer to him than his own reputation, or the credit of any party or number of men, or than his worldly interest. He had rather, like *Elijah*, be persecuted, with the few zealous for the uncorrupted religion of Jesus, than by prophesying smooth things, and countenancing established prejudices, make his court to the great or the multitude. *He keeps back nothing that is profitable, and shuns not to declare the whole counsel of God*. Like *St. Paul*, who feared not to oppose *St. Peter*, when he would have departed from the simplicity and liberty of the gospel\*, he is above being prevailed upon by the credit or friendship of the best and greatest, against the honour and truths of his master. Having found the truth as it is in Jesus, his next concern is to recommend it in the *best manner* to others, and ingage them to believe his doctrines, and obey his precepts. For this purpose, as he believes the religion of Jesus worthy an infinitely wise and good God, and suited to the nature of man as *reasonable*, and consequently all its doctrines reasonable, and its duties tending to advance the perfection and happiness of mankind; he endeavours to place it in this light before others, to ingage their firm belief, hearty approbation,

\* Acts xx. 20, 27. Gal. ii. 11.



and chearful practice. Reason assures us God is infinitely good, the gospel represents him in this most amiable light, as *love itself*<sup>2</sup>; in this light therefore he represents him, as *willing that all men be saved*<sup>3</sup>, and loving the world, more than he loved the life of his own son<sup>4</sup>. Christ gave himself *for the life of the world*, he therefore represents him as *the Saviour of all men*<sup>5</sup>. Christ declares *his yoke is easy, and his burden light*<sup>6</sup>; of this he would convince men, by shewing the immediate connection of every christian virtue when practised, with present as well as everlasting happiness. Reason assures us all truths are consistent, and he is certain Christ cannot contradict himself; he therefore studies to propound the doctrines of the gospel in a light, that may shew them all conspiring in one great end, the honour of God in the immortal perfection and happiness of men. He can never think it for the honour of Christ to say his religion is *unreasonable*; he will never therefore load the faith of others with unreasonable notions as the doctrines of Christ. Being well acquainted with the great evidences of the gospel, he sets them before others in the best light he can, with love, and in the spirit of meekness, applying himself to their reason, not their passions and weakness. And that the best religion may not be disgraced by an unsuitable behaviour, but that its excellency may be *seen*, as well as *believed*, he recommends it by a good example. Being more solicitous to gain persons to true goodness, to an imitation of the piety, meekness, humility, benevolence, heavenly-mindedness, and the like virtues of his master, than to the opinions and distinguishing practices of any sect; he endeavours his own life may manifest his conviction of the

<sup>2</sup> 1 John iv. 16.    <sup>3</sup> 1 Tim. ii. 4.    <sup>4</sup> John ii. 2, 4, 9, 10.  
<sup>5</sup> John vi. 51.    <sup>6</sup> Mat. xi. 30.



worth and importance of these qualities, and be an inviting representation of them; to make his *light shine before men*, and lead *others to glorify God*, and obey Christ. His piety is rational, fervent, and uniform, free from sourness and censoriousness; from gloomy superstition, or mad enthusiasm<sup>1</sup>. His christian charity is *real* and extensive; *he loves not in word and tongue only, but in deed and in truth*<sup>2</sup>. He steadily governs every passion, abhors not only *unjust* but *mean* actions; and approves himself the friend of God and Christ, by being the friend of mankind. Thus to promote the religion of Jesus is the duty of all his disciples, and would they promote it most extensively, they cannot better do it, than by being exemplary for those virtues; for this will render their good advice, and reasonings, and persuasions, irresistible with others.

4. THEY to whom *to live is Christ*, not only attend to the promoting his religion and interest in some degree, but it is the *prevailing concern*, and *delightful employment* of life. This was St. Paul's temper and character; after he became a christian, his life was wholly devoted to it, he laboured *most abundantly*<sup>3</sup>, sacrificed friends, reputation, wealth, and every worldly interest to it<sup>4</sup>; and declares, that if his death might promote it, he should rejoice and glory in the sacrifice<sup>5</sup>. And thus also the true christian minister does not apply himself to the study of the scriptures, and the recommending the truths they contain, in such a degree only as is consistent with his pursuits of wealth, pleasure, or popular favour; but his unwearied study, his earnest prayer, his constant endeavours are directed to this, the discovering the great and noble truths of Christ's religion in all their evidence,

<sup>1</sup> 1 John iv. 19.  
<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. xi. 23.

<sup>3</sup> 1 John iii. 18.  
<sup>5</sup> Phil. ii. 17.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 10.



and in their native simplicity, and thus propounding them to others, tho' it may cost him what the men of *fleshy wisdom* most value. To grow in the knowledge and practice of religion, not to grow in riches, is his great aim; and to gain men to the *truth as it is in Jesus*, and to *substantial goodness*, not fix them to his own interest or party, his earnest desire and labour. In chusing his station for life, the true christian considers, not, in what way shall I most indulge my ease, raise my fortune, and the like; but in what way best secure my own integrity, and a religious temper, and improve in it, and most promote in the world the honour of Christ, that is, the practice of true goodness? Will the taking such an advantage in business, if barely consistent with justice, yet appear mean and dishonourable, disgrace my christian profession, and lessen my influence for serving my master? I will sacrifice this gain to his honour. It will also be a peculiar part of their concern as parents and heads of families, to cherish the principles of true religion and virtue in those under their care; to watch the most favourable opportunities to insinuate these into the tender minds of children, to encourage every appearance of a good disposition, and suppress the contrary; and early to form them to the love and practice of pure religion, and substantial virtue, which the Apostle calls *forming Christ in them*<sup>\*</sup>, will be their delightful employment, preferred before parties and conversations of mere pleasure, and nearer their hearts, than the temporal prosperity and happiness of their children. Finally,

5. In order to their acting thus steadily and chearfully in those various instances, they keep Christ in view as their great pattern. *Be followers*

<sup>\*</sup> Gal. iv. 19.



*of me*<sup>1</sup>, said our Apostle, *as I am of Christ*. So intent was Christ on promoting, the holiness and happiness of men, that for this purpose he came down from heaven<sup>2</sup>, *put off the form of God, and took on him the form of a servant*<sup>3</sup>. They behold this unparallel'd instance of zeal for God and goodness, with the highest admiration, and learn from it, to sacrifice the pleasures of sense, the show of life, or the wealth of the world, to the same design. Jesus when upon earth *shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God*, tho' the Pharisees hated and persecuted him for it. He disregarded ease and wealth, and refused an offered kingdom<sup>4</sup>, wholly intent on promoting truth and goodness; nor could small apparent success, or the worst treatment, discourage him. They contemplate this unwearied zeal and patience of the Son of God, and learn from him to fix it as their great concern in life, to be and to do good, and chearfully to undergo reproach and sufferings for the sake of truth and righteousness. The great scope of our Saviour's preaching was<sup>5</sup>, not to make men exact in meats and drinks, in washings and external observances, or zealous for abstruse and unintelligible speculations; but to form his hearers to the *love of God, and of mankind*<sup>6</sup>, to a greatness of soul superior to the pleasures or afflictions of life, and a constant endeavour to lay up treasures in heaven by an abounding beneficence, and an increasing purity<sup>7</sup>. They learn from him to place the main stress on these same virtues, and make it their great business to cherish and establish them in their own hearts, and promote them in others. Christ after he had lived in this manner, and spent his time in promoting truth and holiness,

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 1.

<sup>2</sup> John iii. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Phil. ii. 6.

<sup>4</sup> John vi. 15.

<sup>5</sup> Mat. v. 6, 7.

<sup>6</sup> Mat. xxii. 36.

xix. 16. 30.

<sup>7</sup> Luke xii. &c.



and making all within his influence happy; when continuing this course exposed him to ignominy and death, *endured the cross, despising the shame*<sup>1</sup>; they look unto Jesus, and learn from him to *indure the contradiction of sinners, without being weary or fainting*. They are not disheartened, because the rewards of piety and obedience are not granted in this life; but after a life of labour and usefulness, and of ill treatment, can chearfully lay down their bodies in the dust, assured that when their souls *depart hence, they are with Jesus*<sup>2</sup>; and that he who *raised up Christ from the dead, will also quicken their mortal bodies*<sup>3</sup>; and that if they have been conformed to the active goodness, and patient virtue of the Redeemer<sup>4</sup>; they shall be also conformed to his resurrection and glory<sup>5</sup>.—Let this suffice for a sketch of their character, whether ministers or private christians, of whom it may be said, to *them to live is Christ*. I am,

Secondly, To show you what gain death is to persons of this character. And among other advantages, by dying they gain the following.

I. THEY are established in goodness, and fully assured of the unchangeable favour of God, and of Christ. This life is a continued scene of trial, temptation, and danger; but death ends the state of trial, removes the true christian far from temptation, introducing him to *the spirits of just men made perfect*<sup>6</sup>. St. Paul could not think himself out of danger while he lived, but he *strove, and watch'd, and prayed, and kept under the body; lest, while he preached to others, he himself should be a cast-away*<sup>7</sup>. And he did not think himself to have fully attained, or to be *already perfect*<sup>8</sup>. 'Tis true

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xii. 2, 3.

<sup>2</sup> Phil. i. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Rom viii. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. vi. 5.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 10.

<sup>6</sup> Heb. xii. 23.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 25.

<sup>8</sup> Phil. iii. 12.

the



the more improved any are in piety and holiness, by so much more are they raised above danger from temptations, and more established in goodness; yet they are not out of danger; and, *be that stands, must take heed lest he fall*<sup>1</sup>. The opposition and hazard arising from the appetites and passions rooted in the animal body is quite removed by death dissolving the union, and the separate spirit, in which pious and virtuous habits were before fixed, and prevailing, having now no contrary inclinations remaining, with its intire will chooses and practises what is best; what God approves, and Christ will infinitely reward, and can no longer feel any temptation in vice. The temptations arising from ill examples, from the persuasions or contradiction of sinners, are quite abolish'd by death; which transmits the servant of Christ, to kindred spirits, made perfect in knowledge and goodness<sup>2</sup>; to the friendship and conversations of the holy angels<sup>3</sup>, and to the immediate presence of God, and the Redeemer<sup>4</sup>, where every conversation<sup>5</sup>, every thing the soul sees or knows, contribute to encrease and establish the love of holiness, and render him most happy in its perfect exercise. The strength of the soul is now employed no more in resisting temptations, and keeping under opposite dispositions, but the contemplation and love of God and the Redeemer, the knowledge, esteem and practice of whatever is excellent and amiable, engage the whole strength of the soul, and render it as happy as it is holy. Holiness is their reward, their trial no longer; for *they receive according to what they have done in the body*<sup>6</sup>; and *after death is the judgment*<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. x. 21.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xiii. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. xii. 23:

<sup>4</sup> Mat. v. 8.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Cor. v. 8.

<sup>6</sup> 2 Cor. v. 10.

<sup>7</sup> Heb. ix. 27.



FARTHER to be fully assured of the unchangeable love and approbation of God, and the Redeemer is infinite *gain* to them. What pleasure can be compared with the pleasure of conscious goodness, even in the present life, cheered with a good hope of the divine complacency? To think that the Lord of the universe, an all-wise, almighty, and infinitely beneficent being, approves and delights in us; and that his Son, to whom we owe so much, accepts our returns, and we are, though in an imperfect degree possessors of qualities, which render us amiable in the sight of God. He hath not known true satisfaction, who hath not known this; and he who hath enjoyed this, hath enjoyed a pleasure the world cannot equal. Yet in the present state conscious imperfection, our many instances of folly and vice, and the inconstancy of our good resolutions, very much weaken our assurance of the divine favour, and we rejoice with trembling. But who can imagine the transport of joy that will overflow the pious soul, when appearing before God at the end of his probation? He shall beyond all possible doubt be assured of the full approbation of God, that he is thought by God fit for eternal happiness, and by him admitted to a state, where he shall never be able to do any thing but what renders him amiable in his eyes: When he shall be *presented to the Father without spot*, and hear his well-beloved Son pronounce—*Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord*'. Surely death is infinite gain which clears our way to this happiness—Who would not die to be thus happy?

2. THEY who have lived to Christ, *gain* this farther by death, to have every thing from without disagreeable in their service of Christ removed,

Mat. xxv. 21.

and



and find it all *pure* satisfaction and happiness. There is a *real* and a *noble* satisfaction, not only in cultivating true goodness in ourselves, but in heartily endeavouring also to advance it in others; thus to make the most grateful return to God and the Redeemer for their love to us, and to promote a most excellent design, the perfect happiness of immortal beings. This satisfaction hath great allays in the present life. The slow success at best of our endeavours to do good, and the numerous instances of those who defeat all our kind designs towards them, and continue enslaved to sin, under the sentence of eternal destruction, deeply affect the servants of Christ; who like their master *would have all men to be saved*, and all rise to degrees of holiness worthy their christian profession. Death is greatly the gain of such, by putting an everlasting end to this uneasiness. They are admitted to a society where all their endeavours to communicate knowledge, and animate devotion or goodness, are intirely successful. Would they communicate to minds of an inferior order any noble discoveries of the divine perfections, and works? They are in the best disposition to receive them, and feel their influence, and rise by them to a more exalted love and veneration of the Deity. They see all the members of their glorious society, *holy and happy as they wish them*, and continually advancing in holiness and happiness. They also now see clearly, that God will make all happy who are any way fit for blessedness, and all the partial fondnesses and affections of mortality are lost in a rational benevolence, and an intire acquiescence in the determinations of infinite wisdom and goodness.

FARTHER, the doubts that attend many important truths, and the clouds that now hang over God's dispensations to the world and the church,



occasion frequently great uneasiness to the servants of Christ here, and death is greatly their gain by clearing all these. Now, *they know in part, but then they know as they are known*. And, *blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God*. All the great and noble truths that relate to the perfections, providence, and government of God, the dignity of his Son, and the salvation of the world by him, appear in all their evidence and beauty; *faith* is exchanged for *sight*, and doubt and darkness are no more. Who that knows the delight of contemplating sublime and important truths, and the pain of doubting, can question whether this be great gain? Now happy are they also in clearly seeing the wisdom and goodness of all the divine measures and dispensations, they at present implicitly believe to be wise and good. The wide spread of imposture and heathenism, the general and established corruptions of christianity by superstition and popery, the oppression and persecution of true religion almost every where, and the small appearing number of the faithful servants of Christ; these events perplex the minds of his friends now, when they seriously think of them. But in the other world they see that all power was really in the hands of Christ; that by the best methods, tho' to us unsearchable, he now carries on his grand design, the holiness and immortal happiness of all of our race who are fit to be made happy; and they triumph in the certain prospect, and near approach of that period, when the interests of Christ, of truth and goodness, shall universally prevail, *and the kingdoms of the world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ*. To have a certain assurance of this glorious event, and clearly to see what we

1 Cor. xiii. 12. *now* Mat. v. 8. Rev. xi. 15.

now



now think most opposite, so directed as to prepare the way for it, how transporting the pleasure to all who love truth, who love God, and Christ, and mankind? And how greatly is death their *gain* which introduces them to this! and which while they are perhaps employed in advancing these great events in the best manner, gives them to see their continual successful progress, and the certainty of their full accomplishment. How did our Apostle rejoice, when by the spirit of prophecy, he, though obscurely, foresaw the *fullness of the Gentiles*, and the *general conversion and salvation of Israel*? and with what extasy does he cry out, *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God*<sup>1</sup>, of whom, and to whom, and through whom are all things, and to whom will be everlasting glory from all. With how much greater transport does he, with all the spirits of just men made perfect, contemplate those scenes of providence in the clear light of heaven?

3. TRUE christians gain this by dying, to be *with Christ* in the immediate presence of God. This St. Paul declares a great part of the advantage he expected from dying. *I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better.* And thus also he tells the *Corinthians*, *that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord; and are therefore willing rather to be absent from the body, and at home with the Lord*<sup>2</sup>. How great this happiness none can fully conceive but they who possess it. That it must indeed be very great, all who love their Saviour in any degree can easily conceive: To *behold him face to face, whom now having not seen they love*<sup>3</sup>! to behold the Son of God, the lover and saviour of mankind, seated on the divine throne at God's right-hand, with a majesty and glory worthy

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xi. 23.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. v. 6.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Pet. i. 1.



the only-begotten of the Father, cloth'd in a human body, the body, once mortal, which he assum'd to save us from the greatest misery, and raise us to the highest happiness! the body, in which, for our sakes he suffered cold, heat, hunger, weariness, pain, the reproaches of men, the agony of the garden, and the torture of the cross; but glorious now as it was once mean, and as was his condescension, infinitely glorious! to see him crowned with divine honours, transcendently blessed, transcendently amiable! — to worship with the highest veneration, and the most transporting gratitude and joy before the throne, and own the infinite debt of love with a gratitude and devotion worthy the distinct apprehensions we shall then have of his dignity and condescension, his surprizing love to us, and the everlasting felicity to which he hath raised us! Who would not part with all this world calls delightful or lovely for an hour's enjoyment of this? Who but must esteem death greatly their gain, whom it introduces to this glorious presence of Christ, and whom it joins to myriads of angels, and of his redeemed, who *with golden harps and heavenly songs celebrate the exalted saviour, and ascribe salvation, glory, honour and blessing to him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb*. The pleasures of acknowledging with a warmth of devotion the greatness of the love of God in Christ, and the love of Jesus, are some of the greatest pleasures of this life; but how much greater will be the joy, when faith shall be changed into sight, and our imperfect apprehensions into perfect knowledge? And how happy he, who by death hath exchanged the most exalted devotion of the present state for the worship and love of angels and glorified spirits? Could the whole world



purchase their return to mortality, who enjoy this in heaven, and who together with Christ behold the face of God?

CHRIST sits on his Father's throne, at his right hand'. As the discovery God hath made of himself to the world in Christ, is among the most glorious and amiable discoveries of his perfections, and the designs of God are intimately connected, so the knowledge of God is included in the knowledge of Christ; and to apprehend this last completely, there must be a discovery made us of other designs and effects of the divine wisdom, power, and goodness. Our fleshly bodies now separate us from an ever-present God; but this veil once drawn a-side, the pure mind is immediately conscious to his presence, sees God, apprehends his presence and perfections in as clear and strong a manner as we perceive the presence and beauties of a person we behold. Most happy they who thus see God! How inestimable their *gain* in death! clearly to apprehend, and suitably to adore and love a God of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, the author and giver of an infinity of good; the God who made us for immortal blessedness, who redeemed us at the price of his Son's blood, and is now entring us on the possession of that divine and everlasting felicity, which is the fruit of the Son's death, and the Father's love! Heaven is begun with such a one immediately, on dropping the body before he reaches the majestic presence of God, and his happiness there rises and grows continually, by the continually new discoveries he makes in the divine perfections and works, by the full and eternal assurances of the divine complacency, and the continual exercises of the most ex-

<sup>1</sup> Rev. iii. 21. Rom. viii. 34.



the only-begotten of the Father, cloth'd in a human body, the body, once mortal, which he assum'd to save us from the greatest misery, and raise us to the highest happiness! the body, in which, for our sakes he suffered cold, heat, hunger, weariness, pain, the reproaches of men, the agony of the garden, and the torture of the cross; but glorious now as it was once mean, and as was his condescension, infinitely glorious! to see him crowned with divine honours, transcendently blessed, transcendently amiable!—to worship with the highest veneration, and the most transporting gratitude and joy before the throne, and own the infinite debt of love with a gratitude and devotion worthy the distinct apprehensions we shall then have of his dignity and condescension, his surprizing love to us, and the everlasting felicity to which he hath raised us! Who would not part with all this world calls delightful or lovely for an hour's enjoyment of this? Who but must esteem death greatly their gain, whom it introduces to this glorious presence of Christ, and whom it joins to myriads of angels, and of his redeemed, who *with golden harps and heavenly songs celebrate the exalted saviour, and ascribe salvation, glory, honour and blessing to him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb*. The pleasures of acknowledging with a warmth of devotion the greatness of the love of God in Christ, and the love of Jesus, are some of the greatest pleasures of this life; but how much greater will be the joy, when faith shall be changed into sight, and our imperfect apprehensions into perfect knowledge? And how happy he, who by death hath exchanged the most exalted devotion of the present state for the worship and love of angels and glorified spirits? Could the whole world



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<sup>1</sup> Rev. iii. 21. Rom. viii. 34.



alted admiration, love, gratitude, and intire devotedness to God. Be this my happiness, and take the world who will! let death conduct me to this, and whenever it approaches it will be welcome!

4. DEATH is their *gain* who have lived to Christ, as it joins them to the best company, to *angels*, and the *spirits of just men made perfect*<sup>1</sup>. The apostle mentions this as part of the christian's happiness, and it is a very valuable part. It is natural for those who love Christ, to love and delight in those who love and resemble him, are devoted to him, and beloved by him. *In the saints and excellent of the earth*<sup>2</sup>, says David, *is all my delight*; how much greater will be our delight in the saints and angels in heaven?

THE angels are described in scripture<sup>3</sup>, as glorious, wise, powerful, beneficent, and condescending; devoted to the will of God and of Christ, ready to the kindest offices to us, &c. tho' much beneath them, and *ministring spirits to the heirs of salvation*<sup>4</sup>. What satisfactions will the society and friendship of such beings yield us, when we are prepared for their company! The most extensive knowledge and consummate wisdom, temper'd with equal goodness and condescension, prevail in their conversations. With what pleasure may we learn from them innumerable plans of the divine wisdom and love, in executing which they have been concerned, some of them peculiarly relating to ourselves. This was the wise, and kind, and watchful guardian, that preserved me from such a danger, turned off such a temptation which might have ruined me, or threw in my way such an opportunity for doing good, which is now so richly

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xii. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Psal. xvi. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Psal. ciii. 20.

Luke ii. 9. Heb. i. 14.

<sup>4</sup> Rev. v. 11.



rewarded.—Admiration, love, gratitude, the most agreeable affections of the soul, must reign in such society. What advances in divine knowledge may we make with them, who have spent so many thousand years in the court of heaven, been employed in the largest and most beneficent designs of the Deity; and who are masters of the *philosophy* of nature, and have ranged over the creation? They who have a strong desire of knowledge, and who have been happy in the conversation and friendship of a great genius, whose superior knowledge was accompanied with the most obliging condescension, and who used his superiority not to insult our ignorance, but to give us discoveries and pleasures we must otherwise have wanted; they may guess something of the happiness a conversation with angels will yield, when we shall find ourselves, after every converse, more wise, divine, and happy.

DEATH will introduce us also to the society and friendship of *just spirits made perfect*, of the best men of all ages and nations, and of our best friends; those whom we have most esteemed and loved, whose conversation was amongst our greatest pleasures on earth, and will, on account of their great improvements, be much more our happiness in heaven. To see and converse with *Abraham, Moses, Job, David, Isaiah, Daniel*, with the apostles and most distinguished christians and good men of every age, and our pious relations and friends, whose loss we have mourned, and whom to meet again, so much improved, will give a transport of pleasure. The most important truths, and the noblest wonders of the divine hand, are the subjects of their discourse, and treated in a worthy manner.



Pure disinterested love animates every breast; superior knowledge is without pride, and inferior without envy. All distinctions of sects and opinions cease for ever, and truth and goodness are the alone concern and delight of all. To give and receive fresh degrees of knowledge, love, devotion, and happiness, is the employ of every hour of conversation, which never flags or grows indifferent. How happy they whom death admits into this society, and, which is the case of those who have lived any time in the world, find more of their friends got before them thither than are left behind! and who are welcomed to this blissful world by many whose piety and virtue they have assisted, to whose eternal felicity they have greatly contributed, and in whose friendship and happiness therefore they enjoy a superior felicity! <sup>1</sup> *Cicero* describes *Cato* in perfect rapture at the hope of entering, after death, into the society of those great and good men he had known or read of. “O glorious day, says he, when I shall get out of this sink of vice, and from this rabble, and join that divine assembly of noble minds! For I shall go not only to those good men I before mentioned, but to my *son*, than whom I never knew a better man; whose funeral I attended, when, according to the order of nature, he should have attended mine.—And would some God grant me to grow young again, I would absolutely refuse the gift, being happily got so near the end of my race, and an eternal settlement.” If a heathen, amidst such obscure notices of a future state, could thus talk of death as his advantage for introducing him to such good men as he knew, with how much stronger reason may christians con-

<sup>1</sup> *De Senectute ad fin.* O præclarum diem, &c.



clude death their gain, who know so much better company awaits them there, as well better men, as spirits of a higher order, angels and seraphims, *ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands*. But I must not farther indulge myself on this copious and pleasing subject; enough hath been offered to prove *that death is greatly their gain, to whom to live was Christ*. I shall therefore,

\* *Thirdly*, BRIEFLY show the connection between this character, and this happiness; between *living to Christ*, and finding *death* our gain.

I. THEY are closely connected in the *nature of things*. When to us to *live* hath been *Christ*, this, by a natural influence, prepares us to find *death* our gain. Of them who, by the faith of the gospel, and in imitation of Christ, endeavour to perfect holiness in themselves, and promote it in others, it may be said to live is Christ; and the happiness they gain by dying, arises, in a great degree, out of the perfection of holiness. They who, in opposition to the appetites and passions of the animal life, have cherished a prevailing love to God, and Christ, and true goodness, are in their temper disposed, when all these hindrances are removed, to enjoy, in perfection, the pleasures of devotion and goodness, as much as a strong healthful person is to run a race with pleasure, when his fetters are knocked off. They who have been greatly delighted in doing good, strongly concerned for the honour of the divine government, and the interests of Christ, and perplexed by those clouds which hang over the divine dispensations; they are in their temper prepared to enjoy the most exalted satisfactions from clear discoveries of the wisdom

\* Dan. vii. 10.



and goodness of the divine counsels, and their certain success, notwithstanding contrary appearances. And they whose chief satisfactions in life have arisen from meditations on the perfections and works of God, from veneration, love, gratitude, joy and hope in him, and in his Son, and from the conversation and friendship of the wise and good; they are in the very constitution of their souls disposed to enjoy divine pleasures from the immediate glorious presence of God and our Saviour, from the worship, and love, and praises of the heavenly state, from the conversations and friendships of angels and perfected minds, and the continual improvements to be made amidst such company, in knowledge, devotion, and friendship. A wise and good God delights to communicate happiness to his creatures, according to their capacities for it: They therefore who, in obedience to his commands, have cultivated a temper of soul for enjoying a rational and divine happiness in his presence, cannot fail of being admitted to it: His wise goodness cannot but delight to reward them with it: *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.* You might as well suppose a wise and good parent, after he had with great care and expence prepared a son to fill up well a great and good character in life, to deny him that situation in which he might, to the best advantage, answer the care and expence of his education, as God not to receive those to happiness, and make death their gain, whom thro' life, by his gospel, his providence, and his Spirit, he had been preparing, and actually prepared, to possess the felicity of his heavenly kingdom.

2. By the wise appointment, and express declarations of God in his word, these two are connected, *living to Christ*, and finding *death* our gain. *Be not deceived*, says St. Paul, *God is not mocked; what-soever*



soever a man soweth, that shall he also reap; for he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting<sup>1</sup>. You might as well hope to reap without sowing, or to reap wheat when you have sown tares, as to enjoy a spiritual and divine happiness, when you have lived to the flesh. But on the contrary, God is not unrighteous to forget our work and labour of love<sup>2</sup>: But to a patient continuance in well-doing, will render glory, honour, and immortality<sup>3</sup>. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord<sup>4</sup>. And we must receive at last according to what we have done in the body, whether it be good or bad<sup>5</sup>. He that doth righteousness is righteous, as God is righteous<sup>6</sup>. And if we are conformed to the likeness of our Saviour's death, we shall be also to his resurrection<sup>7</sup>. Blessed, therefore, are the dead who die in the Lord, they rest from their labours, and their works follow them<sup>8</sup>. Blessed are they who do his commandments, that they may have a right to the tree of life, and enter thro' the gates of pearl into the heavenly city<sup>9</sup>. I must transcribe a great part of the new testament, if I would cite all the proofs of this truth. God hath appointed this to be a state of trial, and we are placed here amidst the pleasures and distractions of sense, and the temptations of the world<sup>10</sup>; that by adhering to God and goodness, by preferring the pleasures of loving and serving our Saviour, and a resemblance to him in devotion, purity, and goodness, before the interests or pleasures of sense or sin, we might manifest the strength of our love to God, and Christ, and goodness, and grow in it, and thus be qualified for the reward of an approved piety and virtue<sup>11</sup>. This God hath

<sup>1</sup> Gal. vi. 7, 8. <sup>2</sup> Heb. vi. 10. <sup>3</sup> Rom. ii. 7. <sup>4</sup> Heb. xii. 14. <sup>5</sup> 2 Cor. v. 10. <sup>6</sup> 1 John iii. 7. <sup>7</sup> Rom. vi. 5. <sup>8</sup> Rev. xiv. 13. <sup>9</sup> Ib. xxii. 14. <sup>10</sup> James i. 2, 3. <sup>11</sup> 1 Pet i. 7.



and goodness of the divine counsels, and their certain success, notwithstanding contrary appearances. And they whose chief satisfactions in life have arisen from meditations on the perfections and works of God, from veneration, love, gratitude, joy and hope in him, and in his Son, and from the conversation and friendship of the wise and good; they are in the very constitution of their souls disposed to enjoy divine pleasures from the immediate glorious presence of God and our Saviour, from the worship, and love, and praises of the heavenly state, from the conversations and friendships of angels and perfected minds, and the continual improvements to be made amidst such company, in knowledge, devotion, and friendship. A wise and good God delights to communicate happiness to his creatures, according to their capacities for it: They therefore who, in obedience to his commands, have cultivated a temper of soul for enjoying a rational and divine happiness in his presence, cannot fail of being admitted to it: His wise goodness cannot but delight to reward them with it: *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.* You might as well suppose a wise and good parent, after he had with great care and expence prepared a son to fill up well a great and good character in life, to deny him that situation in which he might, to the best advantage, answer the care and expence of his education, as God not to receive those to happiness, and make death their gain, whom thro' life, by his gospel, his providence, and his Spirit, he had been preparing, and actually prepared, to possess the felicity of his heavenly kingdom.

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<sup>1</sup> Gal. vi. 7, 8.   <sup>2</sup> Heb. vi. 10.   <sup>3</sup> Rom. ii. 7.   <sup>4</sup> Heb. xii. 14.   <sup>5</sup> 2 Cor. v. 10.   <sup>6</sup> 1 John iii. 7.   <sup>7</sup> Rom. vi. 5.   <sup>8</sup> Rev. xiv. 13.   <sup>9</sup> Ib. xxii. 14.   <sup>10</sup> James i. 2, 3.   <sup>11</sup> 1 Pet i. 7.



informed us is our present state, and correspondent to this is the frame of our nature, and of the world. We cannot think a wise and good God will act contrary to his express declarations, and to that constitution of things he hath, on the best reasons, established. We must therefore conclude, that they, and they only, *to whom to live is Christ*, shall find *death their gain*. That only they who, on a trial, have approved themselves, can *receive the crown of life*, and the obedient only the everlasting rewards of obedience. 'Tis true the work bears no proportion to the reward, which for greatness is proportioned to the infinite goodness of the giver, yet 'tis dispensed by a wise, as well as good, governor, suitably to the different qualifications and behaviour of his creatures. Would we then be crowned, let us approve ourselves on our trial: Would we receive the reward of obedience, let us chearfully and faithfully obey: Would we all find *death our gain*, let us *all* live to Christ.

I SHALL now close the subject with two or three reflections.

I. As for applying this discourse to the death and character of our worthy friend, I presume you have done it already; and the manifest resemblance of his character in the principal instances with that which makes the first part of this sermon, leaves us no room to doubt whether the blessedness described in the second be his. For this reason I shall not enlarge here, but content myself with just pointing out a few of the chief excellencies that distinguish'd him.

I'LL begin with that in him, which is the *beginning of wisdom*, and a principal part of moral worth, *piety*: His was *rational* and *manly*, arising out of a clear and strong conviction, and worthy apprehensions,



fions, of the being, perfections, and providence of God; and it exerted itself in a chearful prevailing concern to please God in his whole conduct, particularly by imitating him in righteousness and goodness: Like St. Paul, *Having hope towards God that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, he exercised himself herein, to have always a conscience void of offence towards God, and towards man*<sup>1</sup>. His integrity therefore was remarkable. Strictly just, and honestly plain, he knew to use a cautious prudence, keeping ever clear of low artifice and dissimulation: *In simplicity and godly sincerity, not by fleshly wisdom, having his conversation in the world.*

HE was a wise, a hearty, and a firm friend; and, without humouring a weakness, or flattering a vice, was candid, zealous, and constant.

As a minister of Christ, he shew'd his great regard for his master, and deserves our imitation in a diligent and impartial endeavour to know *his truth* and *his will*, and then to recommend these, and these only, to his hearers. He *walked not in craftiness, neither did he handle the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth, commended himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God*<sup>2</sup>. He sought for christianity in the scriptures, by a critical and constant study of them, and by earnest prayer. These were the standard of his faith and practice, and by these he *tried* the *creeds*, and *systems* of fallible men. He did not, as the manner of too many is, first settle his faith by the favourite opinions of a party, and then read the scriptures with a disposition to see nothing in them which would not agree with these; but without regard to these, he endeavoured to find the genuine sense of the sacred writings, and by this tried the

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxiv. 16.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 2.



truth of opinions he had before embraced, or that were afterward recommended. This impartial study of the scriptures, joined with a *solid* judgment, and an *honest* heart, and *succeeded* by the divine blessing, qualified him to recommend, to advantage, the best religion to his hearers: And the great design of his preaching, was the same with that for which *the grace of God appeared bringing salvation, to teach men, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ*<sup>1</sup>. You who heard him constantly, know he did not recommend *abstruse* speculations, *enthusiastic* fallies, or the trifling *distinctions* of a party, and strive to raise a warm zeal for these: But his aim in preaching was to bring you to the *love* of God, and *the love of mankind*; to that *repentance* which is *unto life*, evidencing itself in *ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well*; to an intire subjection of soul to Christ's authority and laws, and *that love* to him which manifests itself in imitating his virtues, and obeying his precepts, and to *that faith* in Christ which makes us *victorious over the world*, encouraging us to expect the reward of eternal life through his death and resurrection, by patiently continuing in well-doing: Clearly to explain, and solidly enforce, the great principles and duties of practical religion; that religion which makes us happy in ourselves, and blessings to all around us; like to God in justice, mercy, and truth here, and which prepares us for the highest happiness, in his immediate presence and perfect love, in heaven: This was the great design of his ministerial labours, and seconded by his example.

<sup>1</sup> Tit. ii. 11—13.



FARTHER, he was a *thorough* and a *consistent* *dissenter*. A regard to *Christ* as *sole* king and lord in his church, to the *sacred scriptures* as a *perfect* rule of faith and manners, and to the *unalienable* rights of *conscience* and *private* judgment, determined him to dissent from the *established* church, and reject their *claims* of authority in matters *religious*, and their *additions* to the faith and worship of the gospel. This *same* principle made him also reject equally like claims and additions made by those, who, dissenting from the national church, and without the countenance of the civil magistrate, pretend, with a very ill grace, to a power they condemn in others; and, self-condemned, invade those rights of conscience they maintain as *sacred* against the establishment. As he disliked every thing of an imposing temper in others, he kept clear of it himself: He *stood fast in the liberty where-with Christ had made him free*<sup>5</sup>; and abhorred to *lord it over God's heritage*<sup>6</sup>; allowing all the same liberty he took for himself, to examine and judge for themselves; and maintaining a great esteem and friendship for those who, in pursuance of this liberty, greatly differed from the sentiments he embraced as true.

As to his general conversation, you, *among whom he went in and out, preaching the kingdom of God*, know how *holily, justly, and unblameably* he behaved among you; and you know how intirely it was the design of his studies and labours, to *form Christ* in you, and ingage you to be intirely devoted to him. You cannot therefore doubt, tho' the nature of his distemper hinder'd his bearing his testimony in the close of life, to the goodness of his master, and of his service, and expressing his well-grounded hope

<sup>5</sup> Gal. v. 1.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Pet. v. 3.



truth of opinions he had before embraced, or that were afterward recommended. This impartial study of the scriptures, joined with a *solid* judgment, and an *honest* heart, and *succeeded* by the divine blessing, qualified him to recommend, to advantage, the best religion to his hearers: And the great design of his preaching, was the same with that for which *the grace of God appeared bringing salvation, to teach men, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ*<sup>1</sup>. You who heard him constantly, know he did not recommend *abstruse* speculations, *enthusiastic* fallies, or the trifling *distinctions* of a party, and strive to raise a warm zeal for these: But his aim in preaching was to bring you to the *love* of God, and *the love* of *mankind*; to that *repentance* which is *unto life*, evidencing itself in *ceasing to do evil*, and *learning to do well*; to an intire subjection of soul to Christ's authority and laws, and *that love* to him which manifests itself in imitating his virtues, and obeying his precepts, and to *that faith* in Christ which makes us *victorious over the world*, encouraging us to expect the reward of eternal life through his death and resurrection, by patiently continuing in well-doing: Clearly to explain, and solidly enforce, the great principles and duties of practical religion; that religion which makes us happy in ourselves, and blessings to all around us; like to God in justice, mercy, and truth here, and which prepares us for the highest happiness, in his immediate presence and perfect love, in heaven: This was the great design of his ministerial labours, and seconded by his example.

<sup>1</sup> Tit. ii. 11—13.



FARTHER, he was a *thorough* and a *consistent* *dissenter*. A regard to *Christ* as *sole* king and lord in his church; to the *sacred scriptures* as a *perfect* rule of faith and manners, and to the *unalienable* rights of *conscience* and *private* judgment, determined him to dissent from the *established* church, and reject their *claims* of authority in matters *religious*, and their *additions* to the faith and worship of the gospel. This *same* principle made him also reject equally like claims and additions made by those, who, dissenting from the national church, and without the countenance of the civil magistrate, pretend, with a very ill grace, to a power they condemn in others; and, self-condemned, invade those rights of conscience they maintain as *sacred* against the establishment. As he disliked every thing of an imposing temper in others, he kept clear of it himself: He *stood fast in the liberty where-with Christ had made him free*; and abhorred to *lord it over God's heritage*; allowing all the same liberty he took for himself, to examine and judge for themselves; and maintaining a great esteem and friendship for those who, in pursuance of this liberty, greatly differed from the sentiments he embraced as true.

As to his general conversation, you, *among whom he went in and out, preaching the kingdom of God*, know how *holily, justly, and unblameably* he behaved among you; and you know how intirely it was the design of his studies and labours, to *form Christ* in you, and ingage you to be intirely devoted to him. You cannot therefore doubt, tho' the nature of his distemper hinder'd his bearing his testimony in the close of life, to the goodness of his master; and of his service, and expressing his well-grounded hope



of the happiness promised to his servants; but that as he lived to the Lord, *he died in him*, and hath found death his exceeding gain.

THE removal of such a minister in the midst of his days and usefulness, should dispose his hearers to consider whether they *walked in the light whilst they had it*, and improved well the advantages they enjoyed by his ministry. They who have hitherto neglected to live to Christ, presuming on the long continuance of an uncertain life, should be taught by his death to delay no longer, when they see the continuance of a well-improved life is not to be depended on. They should therefore immediately begin to live to Christ, that, if, like our friend, surprized by death, it may yet be their gain. And farther, if the description given of a faithful minister of Christ, under the first part of this discourse, be just, this congregation may be directed by it in chusing a successor to our deceased friend.

To us his brethren in the ministry, the loss of so valuable a friend, and such a faithful servant of Christ, and so soon after the removal of that great and good man \*, for whom our tears are not yet dry, should prove a powerful excitement to exert ourselves to the utmost for supplying the loss the church and the world have sustained. Our time for labouring is, we see, of uncertain continuance, let us therefore live to Christ while we may. We have all desirable encouragement: 'Tis to imitate the pattern of God's own son incarnate; 'tis in the best manner to acknowledge our obligations to the most generous friend; 'tis to promote the favourite design of the divine government in our world; a design in itself most excellent, being the perfection and supreme felicity of immortal beings. The work therefore cannot be without its pleasures in the performance; and we are assured death will soon

\* The reverend, learned, and ingenious Mr. Henry Grove.



soon end all that is laborious and uneasy, and prove infinitely our gain, by introducing us to an infinite reward. If we live to the world, death will for ever remove us from our happiness; if we study to please men, we shall not be the servants of Christ, and shall certainly lose his reward: But if to promote true religion, and imitate the virtues of our master, be the business of our lives, death will only end our labours, and admit us to a happiness, compared with which the whole world is a trifle, and compared to the duration of which, millions of ages are not so considerable as a moment compared to these. He that can find a better master, let him serve him; he that cannot, let him serve Christ with a cheerfulness, diligence, and fidelity worthy our master and his work: Let him *live to Christ, and to die will be his gain.*

2. Is death gain to the true christian? Hence we learn, that the uncomfortable notion of the *sleep of the soul* from death till the resurrection, hath no *real* foundation in scripture. Had *St. Paul* imagined any thing of this kind, he would never have called death his *gain*. He would rather have chosen to *live* to Christ, than to be wholly insensible; and he could never *desire to depart* that he might *be with Christ*, but after such a manner that it would be all one as if he was at the greatest distance; and he would have been much more with him by living still here. He farther declares this to constitute the difference between *being in* the body, and *out of* it; that while *we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord*; but *when absent from the body, at home with the Lord*<sup>1</sup>. Whereas if the notion of the sleep of the soul was true, we should be much more *at home with Christ* in the body, than out of it. We

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. v. 6, &c.



are now capable of conversing with him in faith, and hope, and praise, and love, and of receiving communications of his favour; whereas all these would then be cut off in death. Farther, a greater than St. Paul hath informed us, they that *kill the body, cannot kill the soul*<sup>1</sup>; whereas if the soul slept till the resurrection, as the body does, they would as effectually kill the soul as the body. He also promised the penitent thief on the cross, *To day shalt thou be with me in paradise*<sup>2</sup>. This must certainly imply he must be the happier for being there, and not be in the same insensible condition in paradise, with those who were out of it, and know no more of its blessedness than they who would never enter paradise. And this notion agrees less with sound *reason* and *philosophy*, than with *scripture*; for these demonstrate the *simplicity* and *natural immortality* of the soul, and its independance on the body. Let us therefore arm ourselves against the fear of dying, with the thought that when *absent from the body, we are present with the Lord*; and comfort ourselves under the loss of our pious friends, with this hope, that our loss is their gain: That when they are no longer with us, they are in infinitely better company, with God, and Christ, and angels, and the *spirits of just men made perfect*; whither too we, by an imitation of their good examples, may very soon hope to ascend. To conclude,

3. As we desire to have death *our gain*, let us all resolve, that to us *to live* shall be *Christ*. There is no separating these two, which God hath joined together; no entering heaven without a temper suited to its divine felicity; no being happy in the presence and love of Christ, without resembling him in fervent piety, active goodness, purity, and a

<sup>1</sup> Matt. x. 28.<sup>2</sup> Luke xxiii. 43.



heavenly conversation. Let us then be persuaded, if we have not already done it, on a thorough consideration, to devote ourselves to his service, and ratify it in his supper: Let us immediately break off all those vices which are opposite to his interest, and to destroy which he died: Let us apply immediately to the correcting the several vices of our tempers, *and cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.* This life is the only season for doing it; and how frail and uncertain it is, need you be told? Does not the present instance convince you? If you devote life to the pursuits of wealth, pleasure, and a worldly felicity, besides that, guilty reflections, disappointment and vexation, will embitter your choice and happiness, supposing you succeed to the height of your wishes, yet death will certainly come; it will soon come and strip you of all, and what will you then do? You chose your portion in the world, and have now no portion, no hope in God, and no cheering expectations from eternity, but every thing to fear from the displeasure of a righteous and offended sovereign, for despising the heaven of eternal happiness he offered you, trampling on the blood of the covenant, and alienating what was every way his. Whereas if you devote yourselves to the service of God and the Redeemer, and to the obedience of his gospel, and live soberly, righteously, and godly, you will be happier throughout life than the world can make you; happy in conscious goodness, a sense of the divine favour, gratitude and hope in God, well-governed passions, and in the esteem and love of the wise and good, and in views still brightning of a glorious immortality; and when death comes, which is the loss of all good to the wicked, it will be your unspeakable gain. The religion of Jesus will make  
you



you victorious over the fears of death; with calmness, if not triumph, you will resign your departing spirits into the hands of Christ; vice, labour, suffering, will for ever end with regard to you; angels shall conduct your spirits to paradise; the smiles and approbation of God, and of his Son, shall then *assure* your eternal felicity: You shall there enjoy every pleasure worthy a pure immortal spirit, and joyfully expect the general judgment, when the resurrection of your bodies to glory and immortality, and the publick approbation of your judge, shall begin for you the perfection of blessedness, to be possessed, not for some thousands or millions of years only, but for eternity; and your happiness be as unchangeable and sure, as the eternal God your portion. Chuse you then, this day, whom you will serve, and may God direct and confirm us all in a right choice! *Amen.*

F I N I S.





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